

Message Text

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AMEMBASSY MEXICO

AMEMBASSY MONTIVIDEO

AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

AMEMBASSY PANAMA

AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 QUITO 6070

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SHUM, SOPN, EC, NU

SUBJECT: ECUADOREAN VIEWS OF NICARAGUAN SITUATION

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: RECENT EVENTS IN NICARAGUA HAVE RECEIVED WIDE ATTENTION IN THE ECUADOREAN MEDIA, WITH THE OPINION UNIFORMLY HOSTILE TO THE SOMOZA REGIME. PERCEPTIONS OF USG POSITION TOWARD NICARAGUA ARE CONFUSED, WITH SOME THINKING USG IS STILL PROPPING UP SOMOZA, WHILE OTHERS CREDIT CARTER ADMINISTRATION HUMAN RIGHTS POLICY WITH LOOSENING SOMOZA'S GRIP. END SUMMARY.

2. FOR ALMOST A WEEK AFTER AUG. 23, THE SANDINISTA ATTACK ON THE NATIONAL PALACE OF NICARAGUA AND SUBSEQUENT EVENTS COMPTED FOR FRONT-PAGE SPACE IN THE ECUADOREAN PRESS WITH CONFIDENTIAL

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PAPAL ELECTION AND THE RESULTS OF THE FIRST ROUND OF THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION HERE. EDITORIAL COMMENT WAS UNIFORMLY UNFAVORABLE TO THE SOMOZA REGIME. THE MIDDLE-OF-THE ROAD DAILY NEWSPAPER EXPRESO STATED IN AN EDITORIAL ON AUGUST 24 THAT THE VIOLENCE IN NICARAGUA "IS DUE EXCLUSIVELY TO THE DISEASED HUNGER FOR POWER OF THE RULING (SOMOZA) FAMILY, WHICH IS INCAPABLE OF UNDERSTANDING

DEMOCRACY AND WILLING TO COVER ITS OWN COUNTRY WITH BLOOD IN ORDER TO SATISFY ITS APPETITE FOR POWER." ACCORDING TO THE NEWSPAPER, "IF TYRANTS PERSIST IN THEIR ANTI-LIBERTARIAN AND ANTI-DEMOCRATIC DESIGNS, THEN REBELLION IS NOT ONLY A RIGHT, BUT A DUTY, AS JEFFERSON, THE GREAT IDEOLOGUE OF NORTH AMERICAN DEMOCRACY, MAINTAINED." THE EDITORIAL REFERRED TO SOMOZA'S FAILURE TO OBSCURE HIS PARTICIPATION IN THE ASSASSINATION OF PEDRO JOAQUIN CHAMORRO, "A CRIME THAT SHOOK THE CONSCIENCE OF THE ENTIRE WORLD" AND STATED THAT NICARAGUA'S SUFFERING SHOULD END AND GIVE WAY TO "A REGIME THAT WOULD GUARANTEE JUSTICE, PEACE, SOVEREIGNTY, AND THE FULL ENFORCEMENT OF PUBLIC LIBERTIES AND CIVIC RIGHTS." PAPERS HAVE ALSO PROMINENTLY FEATURED THE WASHINGTON POST EDITORIAL CALLING FOR SOMOZA'S RESIGNATION.

3. QUITO'S LEADING NEWSPAPER, EL COMERCIO, STATED IN AN EDITORIAL ON NICARAGUA AUGUST 25 THAT "VIOLENCE CANNOT BE JUSTIFIED OF ITSELF, BUT IN SOME CASES IT MUST BE UNDERSTOOD AS A LAST REACTION, MOTIVATED BY THE PEOPLE'S DESPERATION AT FINDING PERSECUTION AND PRISON AS THE ONLY RESPONSE TO THEIR SEARCH FOR DEMOCRACY, JUSTICE, AND FREEDOM." ACCORDING TO EL COMERCIO, THE SITUATION IN NICARAGUA HAS REACHED A CRITICAL STAGE, WHERE "RIGHT AND LEFT, BUSINESSMEN AND WORKERS, STUDENTS, AND EVEN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH HAD PRONOUNCED IN FAVOR OF

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THE ESTABLISHMENT OF DEMOCRACY IN NICARAGUA." THE NEWSPAPER CASTIGATES SOMOZA FOR REFUSING TO GIVE IN, EVEN WHEN FACED WITH THE EVIDENCE THAT HE HAS NO SUPPORT OUTSIDE OF THE MILITARY, AND CONCLUDES THAT THE ONLY SOLUTION WOULD BE THE RESIGNATION OF THE PRESENT RULERS.

4. IN A COLUMN IN THE EDITORIAL PAGE OF EL TIEMPO, ECUADOR'S MOST CONSERVATIVE NEWSPAPER, JULIO PRADO VALLEJO DEPLORED ACTS OF VIOLENCE, BUT SAID THAT THEY WERE INEVITABLE IN THE STRUGGLE AGAINST SOMOZA'S DICTATORSHIP. THE COLUMNIST STATED THAT THE UNITED STATES CAN DO MUCH TO BRING AN END TO THE NICARAGUAN DICTATORSHIP. "IF THE DEFENSE OF HUMAN RIGHTS HAS ANY MEANING," HE WENT ON, "IT IS TO PROMOTE RESPECT FOR THE RIGHT OF A PEOPLE TO CHOOSE FREELY THEIR LEGITIMATE RULERS. THE DYNASTIC IMPOSITION (OF THE SOMOZAS) IS CONTRARY TO THAT RIGHT."

5. A HIGH FONMIN OFFICIAL, AMBASSADOR HERNAN VEINTIMILLA, IN CONVERSATION WITH POLCOUNS, EXPRESSED CONCERN THAT SOMOZA'S INFLEXIBILITY MIGHT LEAD TO INCREASED POLARIZATION IN NICARAGUA AND THE INSTALLATION OF A COMMUNIST

REGIME ON ECUADOR'S DOORSTEPS. ADDITIONALLY, SOMOZA AND NICARAGUA HAVE BECOME A CONSTANT THEME IN DISCUSSIONS WITH POLITICIANS.

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6. AMONG THE PRESIDENTIAL TICKETS, FRONT RUNNERS JAIME ROLDOS AND OSVALDO HURTADO APPPEAR TO HAVE A SPECIAL ANIMUS AGAINST SOMOZA, WHICH THEY CITE IN PUBLIC ADDRESSES FROM TIME TO TIME. HURTADO SEEMS TO KEEP IN TOUCH WITH THE NICARAGUAN SITUATION STTHROUGH UDEL LEADER EDMUNDO JARQUIN, WHOM HE KNEW IN CHILE. BOTH HAVE INDICATED THAT, IF THEY TAKE OFFICE, THEY WOULD BE AS HARD ON SOMOZA AS CARLOS ANDRES PEREZ.

7. COMMENT: THE MOST REMARKABLE ASPECTS OF ECUADOREAN VIEWS OF THE NICARAGUAN SITUATION ARE THE WIDESPREAD INTEREST IN NICARAGUA AND THE UNIFORM ABSENCE OF ANY VIEWS FAVORABLE TO SOMIOZA. WHEN THE OUTGOING NICARAGUAN AMBASSADOR ATTEMPTED TO GIVE OUT SOME DECORATIONS BEFORE HE LEFT, IT IS SAID THAT MOST OF HIS ACQUAINTANCES MADE
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THEMSELVES SCARCE, HOPING NOT TO BE EMBARRASSED BY HAVING TO ACCEPT A MEDAL IN PUBLIC. WHILE SOMOZA HAS NEVER BEEN VERY POPULAR HERE, CONDEMNATION OF NICARAGUA BECAME NEARLY UNIVERSAL WHEN PEDRO JOAQUIN CHAMORRO WAS ASSASSINATED EARLIER THIS YEAR. CHAMORRO HAD TWICE VISITED ECUADOR AND HAD A LEGION OF FRIENDS HERE AMONG THE MEDIA.

8. PERCEPTIONS OF THE USG POSITION TOWARD NICARAGUA, REFLECTED IN EDITORIAL OPINION AND CONVERSATIONS, ARE CONFUSED. SOME THINK THAT US IS STILL PROPPING UP SOMOZA REGIME, WHILE OTHERS CREDIT GENERAL CARTER ADMINISTRATION HUMAN RIGHTS POLICY WITH LOOSENING SOMOZA'S GRIP. THE QUESTION OF CONTINUED US AID AND MILITARY GROUP PRESENCE --- ECUADOR, FOR EXAMPLE, HAS NEITHER AT THE MOMENT ---ADD TO THE CONFUSION. EMBOFFS HAVE BEEN BRACED SEVERAL TIMES BY ECUADOREAN INTERLOCUTORS WITH ACCUSATIONS THAT COMPLACENT POLICY TOWARD NICARAGUA IS HYPOCRITICAL IN LIGHT OF OUR POSITIONS ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEMOCRACY ELSEWHERE.

9. NICARAGUA, WHILE OF MINIMAL IMPORTANCE TO ECUADOR MATERIALLY, APPEARS TO HAVE BECOME A RATHER EMOTIONAL SYMBOL HERE OF THE CONTINUING STRUGGLE IN LATIN AMERICA BETWEEN DICTATORSHIP AND DEMOCRACY. THE ISSUES IN NICARAGUA SEEM MUCH MORE CLEAR CUT TO EDUCATED ECUADOREANS THAN THEY DO, SAY, IN THE SOUTHERN CONE COUNTRIES. UNFORTUNATELY, THE US SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN IRRETRIEVABLY INTERWOVEN INTO THE ECUADOREAN PERCEPTION OF THE NICARAGUAN PROBLEM WITH CORRESPONDING CONSEQUENCES FOR OWN POSITION HERE.
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